

00-165

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

RM-10803

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

\* \* \* \* \*

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION **RECEIVED**

\* \* \* \* \*

JAN - 8 2004

FIELD HEARING

Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary

\* \* \* \* \*

BROADCAST LOCALISM HEARING

\* \* \* \* \*

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

\* \* \* \* \*

CHAIRMAN POWELL PRESIDING

\* \* \* \* \*

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2003

\* \* \* \* \*

I N D E X

No. of copies rec'd  
Ltr. Assoc

2

## Statements:

Mayor Patrick McCrory.....	4
Representative Mel Watt.....	23
Representative Michael Price.....	

\* \* \* \* \*

## Opening Statements:

Michael K. Powell, Chairman .....	9
Michael J. Copps, Commissioner .....	13
Jonathan S. Adelstein, Commissioner .....	17

\* \* \* \* \*

## Panel One Discussion: Localism Issues

Jim Keelor, President & COO, Liberty Corporation .....	32
Debbie Kwei, General Manager, WCHH-FM .....	34
Tift Merritt, Singer/Songwriter .....	37
Joan Siefert Rose, General Manager, WUNC-FM .....	42

\* \* \* \* \*

Commissioner and Audience Questions: .....	64
--	----

Break: .....	126
--------------	-----

\* \* \* \* \*

I N D E X (Cont.d)

## Panel Two Discussion: Localism Issues

Terri Avery, Operations Manager, Program Director, WBAV-FM .....	127
Jim Goodmon, President and CEO, Capitol Broadcasting Company .....	129
Mary Klenz, Co-president, League of Women Voters .....	133
John Rustin, Director, Government Relations, North Carolina Family Policy Council .....	135
Michael Ward, General Manager, WNCN-TV .....	138
Commissioner and Audience Questions: .....	141

\* \* \* \* \*

P R O C E E D I N G S

5:35 P. M.

1 CHAIRMAN POWELL: Good evening, Ladies and  
2 Gentlemen, and welcome to the first public hearing of the  
3 Federal Communications Commission on localism in  
4 broadcasting.

5 This event also serves as a fact-gathering inquiry  
6 to coincide with your local broadcasters' licenses coming up  
7 for FCC renewal, as they do every eight years.

8 My name is Michael Powell; I serve as chairman of  
9 the Federal Communications Commission. I am joined by my  
10 two distinguished colleagues, to my right, Commissioner Mike  
11 Copps, and to my left, Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein.

12 I also want to express my regrets that our other  
13 two colleagues cannot be here, Commissioner Abernathy, who  
14 has an illness in the family, and Commissioner Martin, who  
15 has another commitment.

16 Before we get started in earnest, I have the  
17 distinct pleasure of introducing the Mayor of Charlotte who  
18 has been terrific in bringing us to his town, the Honorable  
19 Patrick McCrory. Mayor?

20 MAYOR MCCRORY: Mr. Chairman, Commissioners,  
21 welcome to Charlotte, North Carolina. And I also, Mr.  
22 Chairman, need to also give my best to the Secretary of  
23 State and just let him know that we really appreciate not  
24 only the work he's doing for our country and for our world,  
25 but we also want to let him know we haven't forgotten about

1 America's Promise. He's been very active in our local  
2 America's Promise efforts, and we really do appreciate that  
3 very much.

4           On behalf of the City of Charlotte we'd like to  
5 welcome you to the 19th largest city in the United States of  
6 America, the second largest financial center, and the home  
7 of the almost undefeated Carolina Panthers, and home in the  
8 near future to the Charlotte Bobcats, and also I must also  
9 say the Charlotte 49er basketball team.

10           But it's a city we're very, very proud of. We  
11 have a population of 610,000 people in an area of about 280  
12 square miles. And your job is very important for Charlotte  
13 and our future because communications and the media and the  
14 interaction with the public is a very, very important  
15 priority for us all, as it is in most cities.

16           As the hearings unfold today you are going to hear  
17 from many voices because Charlotte is not afraid to speak  
18 out, but we will do it in a very, very professional and  
19 respectable way.

20           I would like to make you aware I also represent  
21 mayors from throughout the country as a member of the Board  
22 of Directors of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. And I just  
23 want to briefly take advantage of this welcome, if you don't  
24 mind, Mr. Chairman, to mention two issues that are important  
25 to this mayor and also mayors throughout the nation, and

1 that is especially with the issue of homeland security.

2           At this point in time we need to solve the  
3 interference issue so channels for our emergency responders  
4 are no longer intermingled among and adjacent to commercial  
5 channels. This is extremely important to our first  
6 responders in this region and throughout the regions  
7 throughout the United States.

8           Your support of the consensus plan which is  
9 supported by all of the top organizations of the first  
10 responders' profession will help enhance public safety by  
11 realigning the 800 megahertz system into two distinct  
12 blocks, with one for public safety and the other one for  
13 wireless carriers.

14           This will virtually eliminate any chance of  
15 interference, and once again provide reliability in the  
16 first responder communication system without costing local  
17 governments millions of dollars.

18           As a member of -- as a new member of Secretary  
19 Ridge's Homeland Security Commission, communications is one  
20 of the most vital parts of homeland security, and your role  
21 in that effort is very, very important to us all. So I ask  
22 for your support of the consensus plan and the subsequent  
23 funding to address this homeland security issue.

24           In addition to the public radio spectrum issue,  
25 your rule-making decisions in the area of cable modems and

1 internet service will have a direct impact on the financial  
2 well being of cities throughout the United States.

3           Local governments are presently unable to collect  
4 franchise fees because of a recent ruling in 2002  
5 classifying cable modem services as information rather than  
6 cable or telecommunications services. This is talking about  
7 our right-of-ways which has been our property which we get a  
8 fair return of dollars for. And that basically renews that  
9 while at the same time we're getting many unfunded mandates  
10 from the Federal Government. We're having our revenue  
11 stream taken away from cities throughout the United States.

12           This has caught us quite off-guard, and in  
13 Charlotte alone reduces revenues from the \$5 million we  
14 currently collect from cable franchises.

15           I'm worried about the slippery slope of unfunded  
16 mandates that will continue to happen, in addition to the  
17 slippery slope of what's next regarding taking funding away  
18 from getting money from our right-of-ways. I did want to  
19 make you aware of that, although I know you're here to talk  
20 about primarily some other issues of important legislation,  
21 and I do want to recognize that.

22           I do want to say something about our media outlets  
23 here in Charlotte. Overall I want to compliment them  
24 because they've been extremely responsive in most cases to  
25 our public needs, especially during emergencies.

1 Even on 9-11 we had incredible evacuation from our  
2 high rise towers because we are the second financial center  
3 in the United States, and most people don't realize that.  
4 But on 9-11 we had people evacuating our high rise buildings  
5 and our media and other people involved helped communicate  
6 exactly what we needed them to do during 9-11.

7 And also we needed their help during hurricanes  
8 and ice storms and other types of activities, and they've  
9 all been extremely cooperative when we, the City, have asked  
10 for their assistance, whether it be the TV stations or the  
11 radio programs, and we've been very complimentary of them.  
12 And they've also continued to provide us good public  
13 service.

14 I will say this in Charlotte. There's a very  
15 strong community norm of responsibility that is not only put  
16 on public servants like myself, but also on the media. And  
17 if you cross that norm and you don't get involved in this  
18 community, the market and the community will respond and  
19 they will respond in many different ways, both with their  
20 pocket books, with people speaking out against them if they  
21 don't take full responsibility and care for our city.

22 Because we have a firm belief in Charlotte that  
23 when you come here, you can make a living, but you also must  
24 care for the current and future of Charlotte, and you must  
25 make it a better place in which to live, work, and raise a



1 family, and that includes the media organizations.

2 We do listen to the marketplace. I say this  
3 rather lightly, but an example of that is The Howard Stern  
4 Show did not make it here in Charlotte. And that to me says  
5 something because we do have community values and community  
6 norms that are very, very important to us. And we expect  
7 the people in the media markets respond to those norms, care  
8 for our community, and help educate the community in many  
9 areas, including government service.

10 So on behalf of everyone in the City of Charlotte,  
11 welcome, enjoy your stay here. I hope you get to visit our  
12 city more. Chairman Powell, I know you got to walk in our  
13 city a little bit this morning, but next time stay longer  
14 and we'll give you a great tour and we'll take you to a  
15 Carolina Panther football game too.

16 Thank you and may God bless each one of you.  
17 Thank you very much.

18 (Applause.)

19 CHAIRMAN POWELL: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And as a  
20 Redskin fan, we're happy to be in greener pastures here in  
21 Charlotte.

22 (Laughter.)

23 MAYOR McCRORY: You're coming soon.

24 CHAIRMAN POWELL: Yes, sadly. I also want to just  
25 thank you and all the wonderful people of Charlotte who have

1 just extended the classic southern hospitality to the  
2 Commission. It's been one of the best organized events  
3 we've ever had, and I really want to extend my compliments  
4 to you and to the citizens of the city.

5 With that let me begin with some opening remarks.

6 Back in August I announced an initiative on localism in  
7 broadcasting. A critical part of that effort is for the FCC  
8 to get out of Washington and start talking to Americans  
9 about the system of broadcasting and how it serves local  
10 communities.

11 We are here in Charlotte tonight to kick off a  
12 series of public hearings on localism in broadcasting, and  
13 to use those hearings as a part of the record we will use to  
14 make decisions on whether or not to renew the licenses of  
15 your local broadcasters.

16 So what is localism and why does the FCC care  
17 about it? Generally speaking, localism is the  
18 responsiveness of a broadcast station to the needs and  
19 interests of its community. Promoting localism is one of  
20 the principle reasons the FCC regulates broadcast television  
21 and radio.

22 Before a radio or television station can go on the  
23 air, it must receive a broadcast license from the FCC. If  
24 the FCC determines the applicant is qualified to hold a  
25 license, one is issued.

1           In return, however, the licensee promises to serve  
2 the public interest through its property. A key part of the  
3 public interest is that the broadcaster air programming that  
4 is responsive to the community of license. This public  
5 interest obligation applies uniquely to broadcasters and is  
6 what singularly distinguishes them from cable or satellite  
7 channels.

8           The FCC has promoted localism in two major ways.  
9 One is by limiting the number of stations an entity can own.  
10 But regardless of who owns the station, that owner is  
11 legally obligated to serve the local community. This  
12 inquiry here seeks to examine if that is happening, and if  
13 not, to consider the actions the Commission might take,  
14 including potentially not renewing an owner's broadcast  
15 license for failing to serve the public interest.

16           In the past the Commission tried to promote  
17 localism by requiring broadcasters to air certain kinds of  
18 programming that it believed was in the public interest.  
19 Over time, however, the media environment became more  
20 competitive and past FCC's have relied more on free markets  
21 to ensure that citizens received the programming they  
22 wanted.

23           But a station's duty to serve its local community  
24 has never changed. Today's hearing begins an on-the-ground  
25 inspection of how our broadcast system is working for local

1 communities. Specifically we have three main objectives of  
2 these hearings.

3 First, we want to hear directly from members of  
4 the public on how they think their local broadcasters are  
5 doing; what you do like, what do you dislike; what do you  
6 think should be done differently?

7 Secondly we want to hear from broadcasters about  
8 their localism efforts. I know many broadcasters are  
9 justifiably proud of their work to serve their local  
10 communities and we need to hear from them.

11 And third, we want to educate the members of the  
12 public on how they can participate at the FCC when a local  
13 station's license is up for renewal.

14 I see these hearings as an opportunity to bring  
15 these license renewals to life. It is one thing for us as  
16 commissioners to sit at our desks in Washington and read a  
17 dry rule application; quite another to talk directly with  
18 the people who listen to those stations every day.

19 We chose Charlotte as our first hearing site in  
20 part because the radio and TV licenses for North Carolina  
21 and South Carolina are up for renewal shortly, and we wanted  
22 to begin spreading the word that renewals are not just an  
23 inside the Washington Beltway phenomenon. They're open to  
24 anyone who has something to say about their local stations.

25 Along these lines I have asked the FCC staff to

1 prepare a short primer on how to participate in the license  
2 renewal process. Those will be available to you on the  
3 tables in the back of the room. This primer is also located  
4 on our website at [www.fcc.gov/localism](http://www.fcc.gov/localism).

5 Finally I want to thank the panelists for  
6 preparing testimony and joining us tonight. The  
7 participation of local broadcasters is critical if these  
8 hearings are to be meaningful, and I extend my sincere  
9 thanks for your presence here tonight. And I want to wish  
10 to thank the local groups and individuals who have agreed to  
11 speak tonight as well.

12 And finally I want to extend a welcome to the  
13 citizens of Charlotte who are here in attendance, as well as  
14 those watching on TV or listening via the FCC's audio  
15 webcast. We very much look forward to tonight's discussion.

16 With those opening remarks, let me give my  
17 colleagues an opportunity to speak, and I first introduce  
18 you to Commissioner Mike Copps. Commissioner?

19 COMMISSIONER COPPS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
20 Good evening and welcome to all. It's always a happy  
21 occasion for me to return to the Carolinas, having lived for  
22 a number of years just down the road in Spartanburg and  
23 having many pleasant memories of being a student at Chapel  
24 Hill. I am most grateful for the hospitality that we have  
25 received while we are here today, grateful for everybody

1 taking the time to turn out this evening.

2 I'm particularly pleased to see Congressman Mel  
3 Watt from Charlotte, the 12th Congressional District, and my  
4 friend David Price from the 4th District here tonight. Both  
5 of these gentlemen have shown strong and visionary  
6 leadership in a host of media issues.

7 Tonight we continue a truly remarkable grassroots  
8 dialogue about the future of our media. Over the course of  
9 the past year we have witnessed a growing national concern  
10 over what many people believe are disturbing trends in the  
11 media. Citizens from all over the country, conservative and  
12 liberal, republican and democrat, young and old, rural and  
13 urban, north and south have come together to express their  
14 concern and even alarm.

15 For many months the discussion focused on  
16 ownership rules implemented by the Federal Communications  
17 Commission with people asking how many or perhaps, more  
18 accurately, how a few broadcast stations, media  
19 conglomerates should be allowed to own, or for what purposes  
20 are stations granted licenses, and how does the public  
21 interest fare in the more heavily consolidated environment.

22 This ownership dialogue continues in Congress and in the  
23 courts around the nation.

24 Tonight we address core media values, particularly  
25 localism, from a little different perspective. But we must

1 realize, of course, that it is all part of a larger  
2 discussion about protecting the people's interest and the  
3 people's airwaves. No part of this grassroots dialogue can  
4 be divorced from any other part.

5           As we begin this first of several Commission  
6 hearings, we should return to basic principles reminding  
7 ourselves that all of us own the airwaves, and the  
8 corporations that are given the privilege of using this  
9 precious public asset, and to profit from that use in  
10 exchange for their commitment to serve the public interest.

11           Broadcasters have been given very special  
12 privileges and they have very special responsibilities to  
13 serve their local communities.

14           Since the 1980's, in my opinion, fundamental  
15 protections of the public interest have been weakened and  
16 have withered. Requirements like meeting with members of  
17 the community to determine the needs and wishes of their  
18 local audience, teeing up controversial issues for viewers  
19 and listeners, encouraging antagonistic points of view, and  
20 providing viewpoint and program diversity, to name just a  
21 few of the obligations that once we had.

22           In addition we have pared back the license renewal  
23 process from one wherein every three years examined very  
24 rigorously whether the broadcaster was actually serving the  
25 public interest, to one wherein now companies need only send

1 us a short form every eight years and generally nothing  
2 more. These days getting a license renewed is pretty much a  
3 slam dunk. It's not called postcard renewal for nothing.

4           So step by step, rule by rule, public interest  
5 protections strike me as being weaker, much weaker than they  
6 used to be. I believe this has happened at a high and  
7 dangerous cost to the American people. Some call my concern  
8 excessive, but I believe in my bones that the survival of  
9 fundamental value hinges on the outcome of this national  
10 dialogue.

11           We come to Charlotte to talk directly with members  
12 of this community and region and to tap its local expertise  
13 as to what is happening here. How can we possibly know if  
14 licensees are serving their communities without hearing from  
15 the community? Are stations adding to the civic dialogue?  
16 Are they adhering to community standards, or are they airing  
17 excessive amounts of indecent and excessively violent  
18 programming?

19           Are they encouraging local talents and local  
20 genius? Are they reaching out to minority groups within the  
21 community?

22           I know we will leave here tonight knowing facts  
23 and having perspectives that just wouldn't have floated into  
24 us had we remained in Washington. We start with our panels  
25 tonight and I would like to thank each panelist for taking



1 the time and trouble to be with us this evening.

2           What I'm especially looking forward to is hearing  
3 from members of the public that have given up their evening  
4 to be here to discuss the importance of local broadcasting  
5 in their communities. I have seen this around the country,  
6 the interest and the high value that the American people  
7 place on localism in broadcasting.

8           And I think it shows how important this issue is  
9 here when so many of you turn out in this room this evening  
10 and I understand in the overflow rooms also. North Carolina  
11 is making its voice heard, and I am enormously pleased to be  
12 here to listen and to learn.

13           So I thank each of you, and I thank you, Mr.  
14 Chairman, for bringing us together tonight.

15           CHAIRMAN POWELL: Thank you, Commissioner, for  
16 your remarks. Commissioner Adelstein.

17           COMMISSIONER ADELSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
18 It's great to be here in Charlotte to begin this dialogue  
19 on how well broadcasters are serving their local  
20 communities.

21           I'd like to commend Chairman Powell and my fellow  
22 Commissioners for bringing us together and getting these  
23 historic hearings underway.

24           I think the key is, as the Chairman said, for us  
25 to get outside of Washington and to hear directly from

1 people in communities like Charlotte. And we're doing a  
2 series of these across the country in a very select group of  
3 cities, and I just think that it's so important that we do  
4 so. I also recommend that we continue to keep our eye on  
5 what's happening in local communities as we go through each  
6 of these license renewals.

7 I'd like to recognize Congressman Watt and  
8 Congressman Price for their leadership on these issues, and  
9 thank them for being here.

10 I think that it's also critical that these  
11 hearings are taking place just in time for us to tell the  
12 public how they can participate in this upcoming round of  
13 license renewals. This is really, I think, historic that we  
14 are looking at this issue at all, because these have been,  
15 as Commissioner Copps outlined, a postcard process.

16 Now we're getting out here, we're taking it  
17 seriously, we want to hear from people, we want to see  
18 what's happening.

19 I think that the broadcasters, they're in many  
20 cases doing a great job, but we need to keep people's feet  
21 to the fire to ensure that they're continuing to serve their  
22 local communities. I don't think most people in the public  
23 are even aware that these license renewals are happening,  
24 and we're here to let you know how you can get involved.

25 Tonight's hearing falls around the hearings that

1 were held around the country last spring to hear public  
2 input about the media ownership rules that we have. I think  
3 those hearings were tremendously valuable.

4           We heard firsthand from thousands of people, and I  
5 sense that there is a real frustration out among the public  
6 about the media. And one of the issues of concern was  
7 localism, and I think it's appropriate that we now focus on  
8 that issue head-on. And I think that we'll learn a lot  
9 about that issue, even more deftly than we did last time.

10           So we're here to talk about localism and I'd like  
11 to talk a little bit about what that means. Every community  
12 has its local needs, its local talents, local elections,  
13 local news, and local culture. And localism reflects the  
14 commitment to local news and public affairs programming, but  
15 it also means a lot more.

16           It means providing opportunities for local self-  
17 expression, it means reaching out, developing and promoting  
18 local performing artists and other local talent. It means  
19 making programming decisions that serve local needs. It  
20 means making sure that the coverage reflects the makeup of  
21 the community.

22           I was fascinated to learn, for example, that the  
23 Hispanic population in North Carolina has increased by  
24 nearly 400 percent since 1990, with Raleigh, Greensboro and  
25 Charlotte three of the four fastest growing Hispanic cities

1 in America. We need to know the concerns of the growing  
2 Hispanic community as well as the African-American community  
3 and other minority groups, that they are getting the  
4 attention that they deserve through the licensed broadcast  
5 outlets in this community.

6 Localism also means the station being responsive  
7 to the community in other ways, such as dedicating the  
8 resources to discover and address the needs of the  
9 community. It means being accessible, sending reporters and  
10 cameras out to all parts of the community, to all the  
11 different stories, to really cover what's happening in the  
12 community, documenting those efforts that they undertake for  
13 the public to review in files that are accessible to  
14 residents in the communities so they can know what the  
15 station's doing.

16 I think there are many local broadcasters in this  
17 country who have shown a long-term and a real commitment to  
18 community service and to localism, and some stations do very  
19 well with this, including some real standouts here in North  
20 Carolina, and I think we'll hear from representatives of  
21 some of those today.

22 So we're here tonight to learn how we can  
23 encourage other stations to put the needs of the local  
24 community first. That's the cornerstone of the public's  
25 social contract with broadcasters.

1           As outlined by my colleagues, they get a valuable  
2 license from the FCC to use the public airwaves, and then  
3 they agree to act as a trustee for the public interest in  
4 return. We don't give out those licenses simply to  
5 broadcasters on a national basis like in other countries.  
6 In many cases, like the BBC in England, they provide  
7 nationwide licenses. Here historically we provide local  
8 licenses to local communities and insisted that they serve  
9 local needs.

10           So each -- you as licensees should take that  
11 obligation very seriously and make sure to inform the  
12 community about local elections, about political  
13 controversies, about good things that are happening in the  
14 community, and other matters that are related to the self-  
15 governance of a democracy.

16           Thinking of my own family and my own father, for  
17 example, was an elected republican state representative in  
18 my home state of South Dakota, and he sees the need for the  
19 media to cover these local concerns, what's happening in the  
20 state government and local government.

21           And I think he's really onto something because if  
22 you look at a study that was done of all the combined TV  
23 coverage of the 2000 campaign, including local, state and  
24 federal, all -- from the sheriff to the President of the  
25 United States, 74 seconds per night is all we saw. People

1 heard a lot more from paid political ads in 74 seconds.

2           Maybe that's why half our population doesn't even  
3 bother to vote. I don't think that's a very healthy thing  
4 for our democracy. And half our people not voting isn't a  
5 healthy democracy.

6           And the licensees of our broadcast stations have  
7 an obligation to do something about it, they have an  
8 obligation to cover what's happening in the community, to  
9 get people aware of what's happening, to not just have them  
10 get all their information from these overwhelming negative  
11 ads. They need to cover local political issues.

12           So we're about to begin an in-depth examination.  
13 This is the beginning of it, of how we, the FCC, can improve  
14 how broadcasters serve their local communities, and we need  
15 your input as we launch this investigation.

16           For example, how to hold stations accountable when  
17 shock-jock programming offends community standards or harms  
18 the residents. We've heard some stories about that right  
19 here in North Carolina.

20           So I look forward to hearing from all the  
21 excellent panelists and I want to thank them for coming from  
22 all across the State of North Carolina to share their views  
23 about how the local communities are being served, or how in  
24 the case of the broadcasters they are serving their local  
25 communities.

1           So thank you all for coming out and sharing your  
2 views, and I thank the public for coming here, and I look  
3 forward to hearing from you.

4           I've got a two-week baby home, so I've got to rush  
5 out right afterwards to get back and make sure I'm serving  
6 my own immediate local community. Thank you for your time  
7 and I look forward to hearing from the witnesses.

8           CHAIRMAN POWELL: Thank you very much,  
9 Commissioner Adelstein. As you've heard, we are really  
10 honored to have with us two very distinguished members of  
11 the United States Congress who have taken some time to come  
12 and lend their support to the hearing.

13           We're going to hear from Congressman David Price,  
14 Democratic representative from Chapel Hill, first elected to  
15 Congress in 1986, and also Congressman Mel Watt, the  
16 Democratic representative from here in Charlotte who has  
17 served since 1992.

18           And I'd like to invite them first, if Congressman  
19 Watt would like, to make a few remarks, and we welcome you  
20 to do that, sir.

21           CONGRESSMAN WATT: I want to personally thank  
22 Chairman Powell and the other Commissioners for providing  
23 this opportunity for our residents to express their feelings  
24 about the importance of localism in broadcasting.

25           I'm mindful that the purpose of this hearing is to

1 get the input of the people, not their representatives in  
2 Congress. Consequently, my comments will be brief and I've  
3 submitted a longer version of what I have to say to the  
4 secretary.

5 Before proceeding to my substantive comments, I  
6 want to make two brief points that may be unnecessary  
7 because they are so obvious. I do so only because I think  
8 they should not be taken for granted.

9 First, isn't it great to live in a country that  
10 places a value on having a discussion such as this which  
11 first and foremost assumes an unequivocal commitment to the  
12 importance of the First Amendment and to the importance of  
13 the rights the First Amendment protects, free speech and  
14 free and open press?

15 What would many people around the world give to  
16 have an opportunity such as this to express themselves?

17 Second, while tonight's discussion is about  
18 localism in broadcasting, and you're likely to hear over and  
19 over that localism is important, I think it is also  
20 important to emphasize that every element of our system of  
21 broadcasting plays a valuable role whether the local,  
22 regional, national, print, television, radio or tech. In  
23 short, the best citizen is an informed citizen.

24 Substantively, my bottom line is that localism in  
25 broadcasting is extremely important. That probably became



1 obvious from a high profile source recently, the President  
2 of the United States.

3           President Bush complained about how he perceived  
4 that the national media was filtering good information about  
5 the way things are going in Iraq, and indicated that he was  
6 turning to local broadcasters to get the, quote, real story  
7 out. If all of our media had been national media, that  
8 option clearly would not have been available to the  
9 President. This example clearly illustrates the value of  
10 differing perspectives in the media.

11           I suspect you're going to hear a parade of people  
12 today who agree with the President that localism is  
13 important. I'll also be surprised if you don't also hear  
14 that the current local and national breakdown seems to be  
15 working real well in this community, which leads me to the  
16 first point I want to make.

17           If the system wasn't broke, why did the FCC try to  
18 fix it? Already today ten companies control the huge  
19 majority of media, radio, television, books, magazines,  
20 cable, internet, movies and music. One can make a good case  
21 that localism was about the only thing that was keeping some  
22 semblance of balance in the system.

23           So why would the FCC want to make a bad situation  
24 worse by running the risk of reducing that important local  
25 ingredient?